

Message Text

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SUBJ: EDITORIAL ON DIEGO GARCIA

1. SUMMARY: THE JULY 30TH EDITORIAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN CARRIED AN EDITORIAL FAVORING THE DECISION TO EXPAND THE FACILITIES ON DIEGO GARCIA. THE FULL TEXT OF THE EDITORIAL IS REPEATED BELOW: END SUMMARY

2. QTE. THE EFFECT ON AUSTRALIA OF AMERICA'S CONGRESS-CONFIRMED DECISION TO EXPAND THE DIEGO GARCIA BASE DEPENDS ON ONE QUESTION: TO WHAT USE WILL THE BASE BE PUT?

3. QTE IF IT MEANS A LAST-DITCH AMERICAN ATTEMPT TO ASSERT ITS GLOBAL SUPERIORITY; IF IT IS TO BECOME A BASE FOR A NEW ADVENTURISM; A FOCUS POINT FOR SUPER-POWER CONFRONTATION; A MEANS OF INTIMIDATING THE 30 STATES AROUND THE INDIAN OCEAN; IF IT IS TO LEAD TO AN ARMS RACE IN THAT OCEAN, THEN THE DECISION IS BAD NEWS FOR AUSTRALIA, TO SAY NOTHING OF THE REST OF THE WORLD.

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4. QTE. BUT IF IT IS SIMPLY A RESTATEMENT OF AMERICA'S DETERMINATION TO HOLD IT OWN; A MAINTENANCE OF THE BALANCE OF POWER;; A CENTRAL OBSERVATION POST TO MONITOR TRADE ROUTES WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO AUSTRALIA; A SOURCE OF SPIN-OFF INTELLIGENCE FOR US; A TOKEN OF GLOBAL INTEREST RATHER THAN ISOLATIONIST RETRACTION, A FACILITY FOR AMERICAN SEA AND AIR ACTION SHOULD IT BECOME NECESSARY IN TIME OF ECONOMIC OR MILITARY CRISIS, THEN AUSTRALIANS SHOULD WELCOME THE MOVE.

5. QTE. WE BELIEVE THE LATTER TO BE THE CASE. THE FORD ADMINISTRATION, AND TH U.S. CONGRESS WHICH HAS NOW APPROVED ITS PLANS, AT LEAST FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS, FACED A NUMBER OF OPTIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

6. QTE. IT COULD HAV NEGOTIATED WITH RUSSIA FOR A REDUCTION OF NAVAL FORCES. BUT FROM WHAT POSITION? THE FEATURE ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE SHOWS RUSSIA'S POSITION: A MISSILE-LOADING BASE IN SOMALIA, NAVAL BASES IN INDIA, DEVELOPED PORT FACILITIES ELSEWHERE, A STRING OF REFUELLING ANCHORAGES ON THE HIGH SEAS. AGAINST THIS AMERICA SIMPLY HAS REFUELLING RIGHTS, FOR WHAT THEY ARE WORTH, IN A NUMBER OF INDIAN OCEAN PORTS.

7. QTE. AMERICAN CHOSE INSTEAD TO HOLD UP ITS CORNER OF THE TRIANGLE, A TRIANGLE WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE COLLAPSE. HAVING MADE THAT DECISION, WHAT BETTER PLACE TO IMPLEMENT IT THAN ON AN ISLOATED ISLAND BASE WHICH MAY BRUISE SOME BRITISH FEELINGS BUT INFRINGES ON NOBODY'S SOVEREIGNTY?

8. QTE. IN DIAGO GARCIA, IT IS DOING SO IN A POTENT BUT RELATIVELY MODESTWAY. ONLY 600 PERSONNEL WILL MAN THE BASE. FROM OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL INFORMATION, IT IS APPARENT THAT THE EXPANDED DIEGO GARCIA BASE WILL HAVE SUPER-SOPHISTICATED ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT CAPABLE OF TRACKING EVERY SOVIET SHIP IN THE OCEAN. IT WILL BE ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE A SIX-SHIP CARRIER TASK FORCE, AND HOLD ENOUGH OIL TO SUSTAIN IT FOR A MONTH. IT WILL HAVE AN AIRSTRIP CAPABLE OF TAKING B-52 BOMBERS,

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AND IT MAY WELL HAVE MISSILE FACILITIES.

9. QTE. THIS WILL BE ANATHEMA TO INDIA, SINCE DIEGO GARCIA WILL MAKE IT MORE VULNERABLE TO NUCLEAR OR OTHER BLACKMAIL IN THE EVENT OF A US-SOVIET CLASH OF INTERESTS. RUSSIA, WHICH LIKE MOST NATIONS WOULD LIKE EVERYTHING ITS OWN WAY IF IT COULD GET IT, WILL NOT DOUBT MAKE THE USUAL PROPAGANDA NOISES. BUT MOSCOW

WOULD HAVE BEEN MOST SURPRISED AND CONTEMPTUOUS HAD AMERICAN FAILED TO COMPETE. IF PRESIDENT FORD KEEPS HIS WORD AND USES THE BASE ONLY FOR ROUTINE PATROL AND SURVEILLANCE PURPOSES, IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT RUSSIA WILL REGARD DIEGO GARCIA AS THE INVITATION TO AN INDIAN OCEAN ARMS RACE.

10. QTE. THE BASE IS NOT ANATHEMA TO AUSTRALIA, DESPITE MR. WHITLAM'S PUBLIC OPPOSITION TO IT, AND WHATEVER MR. MORRISON SAYS TO MR. SCHLESINGER. WITH OUR LONG, INDEFENSIBLE WESTERN COASTLINE, IT IS OBVIOUSLY IN OUR INTERESTS TO HAVE AMERICANS COMMITTED TO THE REGION.

11. QTE. DIEGO GARCIA DOES NOT REALLY INVOLVE US IN ANY POLITICAL SITUATION, AND CERTAINLY NOT IN ANY MILITARY ONE. SO THE AMERICAN PRESENCE THERE CAN ONLY MAKE US MORE CONFIDENT IN OUR FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE. END QTE.
GREEN

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